posals for electoral reforms) the same privileges and safeguards in the matter of its Secretariat and staff, as are provided in the Constitution, to the Parliament etc., in order to ensure its complete insulation against the Executive and strengthening of the Commission's Constitutional status;

(b) if so, what is Government's response thereto; and

(c) whether the promotion, punishment and transfer etc., of the staff of the Commission are at present under the Ministry of Law and the final decision does not lie with the Commission?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI HANS RAJ BHARDWAJ): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Such a proposal has been made by the Election Commission as a part of several other proposals for electoral reforms in 1982. The Election Commission has not reiterated this proposal subsequently.

In regard to all administrative and service matters in respect of persons occupying posts upto and inclusive of Group 'B' gazetted level, the final authority vests only in the Election Commission. In respect of persons in Group 'A' posts, President being the Appointing Authority, Ministry of Law and Justice remains in the picture. However, in actual practice, and invariably, the recommendations made by the Election Commission are processed for acceptance. Incidentally, excepting those cases for which provision exists in the recruitment rules for appointments to be made on transfer, the staff of the Election Commission are not transferred outside the Commission.

Use of Electronic voting machines

3483. SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the use of electronic voting machines is desirable in elections; if so, the reasons therefor;

(b) whether Government have placed their inventory of the machines to their manufacturers; if so, for how many machines and what is their delivery schedule as also the estimated cost;

(c) whether Government would ensure the use of the voting machines in the ensuing Lok Sabha elections and take all the effective steps well in time; and

(d) how many Lok Sabha constituencies are estimated to be covered by these voting machines?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI HANS RAJ BHARDWAJ): (a) Yes, Sir. A statement summarising the advantages in the use of the Electronic voting machines in elections is attached. (*See* below).

(b) Orders have not yet been placed.

(c) and (d) Suitable provisions have already been made in the Representation of the People Act, 1951, to make it legally permissible for the electronic voting machines to be used in the voting process. The objective is to introduce the machines in the first phase in constituencies identified by the Election Commission as sensitive.

Statement

Advantages of the Electronic voting machines

1. Use of ballot papers in lakhs for every constituency will be dispensed with. This will result in tremendous saving of paper and in cost of printing.

2. Use of ballot boxes is completely eliminated. The number of other items of polling materials and stationery will also be drastically reduced.

3. (a) A great reduction in number of polling personnel will be possible.

(b) Number of vehicles used for transportation will also be greatly reduced.

4. The voting will become far easier, quicker and smoother.

5. There will be total elimination of *invalid* votes.

6. Result of the election can be ascertained on the day of poll itself. This will result in tremendous savings on *bandobast*, arrangements for safe storage of ballot boxes before they are taken up for counting, elaborate law and order arrangements on the day of counting, etc.

7. No rigging is possible at the time of counting. All complaints about irregularities and illegalities in counting which are being often made now would be totally eliminated.

8. The minimum campaign period can be reduced from 20 days as at present to any reasonable shorter period. (The present 20 days minimum period has been prescribed keeping in view the fact that crores of ballot papers have to be printed during this period at the time of a general election).

9. Combination of two or more polling stations located in the same premises is possible as one machine can record as many as 9999 votes.

10. Provision of mobile polling stations is also a distinct possibility.

Setting up of High Court Benches in Western and other parts of Uttar Pradesh

3484. SHRI KAILASH PATI MISHRA:
SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE:

Will the Minister of LAW AND JUSTICE be pleased to refer to the answer to Starred Question 309 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 18th August, 1988 and Starred Question 345 on the 6th December, 1988 respectively and state:

(a) whether Government have made any efforts to receive communication from the Uttar Pradesh Government with regard to the recommendations of the Jaswant Singh Commission on the setting up of High Court Benches in Western and other parts of Uttar Pradesh; and

(b) if not, what are the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF LAW AND JUSTICE AND THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI B. SHANKARANAND): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

Violation of FERA by M/s. Reliance Industries Ltd.

3485. SHRI A. G. KULKARNI:
DR. BAPU KALDATE:
SHRI VISHWASRAO RAMRAO PATIL:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item published in 'the Indian Express' of the 31st January, 1988 (Pune Edition) to the effect that the Director of CBI has handed over to his senior official in the CBI a letter alleged to be from Mr. Hershman which was used to interrogate Mr. Gurumurthy and Mr. Bhure Lal in connection with FERA violation by M/s. Reliance Industries Limited and its London based agents, Shahs Louis Dreyfus Corporation, J. K. Doshi and Saleem;

(b) whether the letter was also shown to the judicial authorities in the case filed by CBI against Mr. Gurumurthy as reported and if so, what are its contents thereof; and

(c) whether any final report has been received on FERA violation by the five gentlemen mentioned in the news-item?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AFFAIRS IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI EDUARDO FALEIRO): (a) No such letter from Mr. Hershman was received by Director, C.B.I. and therefore, the question of handling it over to a senior official did not arise.

(b) In view of reply to (a) above, the question does not arise.

(c) No, Sir.